

## II. AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

*Please amend the claims as follows:*

1. (Currently Amended) A workflow system comprising:  
operating computer terminals executing a workflow; and  
a workflow server connected to said operating computer terminals in a network to manage the workflow, wherein said workflow server consolidates information necessary for processing multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by at least one participant operating one of said operating computer terminals, wherein when a form to be circulated in the workflow reaches a first one of the multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by the at least one participant, said workflow server consolidates information necessary for the at least one participant's determination, and wherein said workflow server generates a new form based on the consolidated information and sends the consolidated information to the operating computer terminal.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The workflow system of claim 1, wherein the operating computer terminal replies with said workflow server results of work performed by the at least one participant based on the information sent from said workflow server.

4. (Original) A workflow system according to claim 3, wherein said workflow

server performs individual processing on each of the multiple nodes based on the results of work performed by the at least one participant and sent from the operating computer terminal to advance the workflow.

5. (Currently Amended) A workflow server connected with multiple computer terminals to manage a workflow comprising:

means for storing a definition of nodes assigned to respective participants performing a workflow;

means for determining a range of consolidating multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by at least one participant in the workflow;

means for acquiring from said means for storing a plurality of work items, wherein each of the plurality of work items is selectable for each node within the consolidation range determined by said means for determining a range of consolidation; and

means for consolidating the work items acquired by said means for acquiring to provide the at least one participant with consolidated information, wherein when a form to be circulated in the workflow reaches a first one of the multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by the at least one participant, said workflow server consolidates information necessary for the at least one participant's determination, and wherein said workflow server generates a new form based on the consolidated information.

6. (Original) A workflow server according to claim 5, wherein:

the definition of nodes includes information relating to access permission to each field at each of the nodes; and

said workflow server further comprises highest-level access permission acquiring means for acquiring from said storage means the highest level of

access permission to each field within the consolidation range determined by said consolidation range determining means.

7. (Currently Amended) A workflow server according to claim 6, wherein:

said means for storing stores a layout definition of a form used for time of one participant's continuous activities; and

providing means provides the at least one participant with a form formatted based on the form layout definition acquired from said means for storing and a field access permission acquired from said highest-level access permission acquiring means.

8. (Currently Amended) A workflow engine connected with multiple computer terminals to manage a workflow comprising:

consolidation range determining means for determining a range of consolidating multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by at least one participant in the workflow;

access permission setting means for setting access permission to each field at each node within the consolidation range determined by said consolidation range determining means;

selectable work acquiring means for acquiring a plurality of work items, wherein each of the plurality of work items is selectable for each node within the consolidation range determined by said consolidation range determining means;

consolidating means for consolidating the work items acquired by said means for acquiring to provide the at least one participant with consolidated information, wherein when the form to be circulated in the workflow reaches a first one of the multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by the at least one participant, said workflow server consolidates information necessary for the at least one participant's determination;

form generating means for generating a new form based on the access permission set by said access permission setting means and consolidating the work items ~~the work items acquired by said selectable work acquiring means;~~ and

form sending means for sending the at least one participant the form generated by said form generating means.

9. (Canceled).

10. (Previously Presented) A workflow engine according to claim 8, wherein when there are multiple work items that are selectable for a certain node, if routes determined for respective work items have no inclusion relationship with one another, said consolidation range determining means determines common part of the routes as the consolidation range.

11. (Original) A workflow engine according to claim 8, wherein said access permission setting means sets the highest level of access permission of the participant to each field defined on the form for each node as the access permission upon consolidation.

12. (Currently Amended) A workflow process consolidation method for consolidating a plurality of work items for each of multiple nodes assigned in a workflow to at least one participant operating a computer terminal connected to a network, said method comprising the steps of:

determining the range of consolidating multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by the at least one participant based on a workflow definition stored in a storage device;

acquiring the plurality of work items, wherein each of the plurality of work items is selectable for each node within the determined consolidation range from the workflow definition stored in the storage device; and

consolidating the acquired selectable work items, wherein when a form to be circulated in the workflow reaches a first one of the multiple consecutive nodes to be processed by the at least one participant, said workflow server consolidates information necessary for the at least one participant's determination, generating a new form based on the consolidated information, and providing the participant with the consolidated information through the network.

13. (Previously Presented) A workflow process consolidation method according to claim 12, wherein when there are multiple work items that are selectable for a certain node, some routes in all the routes determined for respective work items, which are contained in one route, or common part of all the routes is determined in said consolidation range determining step as the consolidation range.

14. (Currently Amended) A workflow process consolidation method according to claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

determining the highest level of access permission to each field within the consolidation range from the workflow definition stored in the storage device; and

acquiring the layout definition of a form to be provided to the at least one participant from the workflow definition, wherein a form as consolidation information is generated in said consolidation information providing step based on the access permission and the layout definition.

15. (Currently Amended) A workflow process consolidation method according to claim 12 further comprising the steps of:

receiving results of work performed by the at least one participant on the consolidated information; and

storing in the storage device the participant's inputted field values and the at least one participant's selected work from the received results of work.